

Message Text

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S/S-O :J.THYDEN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY KABUL
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN, US, XD

SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER'S MEETING WITH
INDIAN MINISTER OF STATE, S. KUNDU

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: MINISTER OF STATE S. KUNDU REVIEWED, AT
THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S REQUEST, INDIA'S CURRENT RELATIONS
WITH ITS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS. WHILE EFFORTS WERE BEING
MADE BY NEW DELHI TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, KUNDU DID NOT HIDE
THAT THE DESAI GOVERNMENT WAS CONCERNED OVER THE FACT THAT
PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH WERE RULED BY THE MILITARY. GOVERN-
MENTS RULED BY THE MILITARY ARE GENERALLY APT TO BE UN-
RESPONSIVE TO POPULAR DEMANDS NORMALLY MADE THROUGH THE
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DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. MOREOVER, DURING PERIODS OF INTERNAL
STRESS, MILITARY GOVERNMENTS OFTEN RESORT TO ALLEGATIONS OF
EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM DOMESTIC
ILLS. KUNDU HOPED THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD NOT POSTPONE
HIS VISIT BUT SHOWED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRESSURES THAT
THE PRESIDENT WAS OPERATING UNDER WITH RESPECT TO ENERGY
LEGISLATION NOW BEFORE CONGRESS. AMBASSADOR PALKHIVALA
ASKED THAT THE U.S. BE SENSITIVE TO DESAI'S POLITICAL PRO-
BLEMS AND AVOID PRESSING HIM PREMATURELY FOR AN AGREEMENT
ON FULL-SCOPE SAFEGUARDS. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL. MINISTER OF STATE S. KUNDU, AT HIS REQUEST, CALLED ON DEPUTY SECRETARY CHRISTOPHER ON THE AFTERNOON OF NOVEMBER 2. ACCOMPANYING KUNDU WERE AMBASSADOR PALKHIVALA, DCM GOKHALE AND POLITICAL OFFICER RAJAN. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DUBS SAT IN ON THE U.S. SIDE. (WE ARE REPORTING THIS CONVERSATION RATHER FULLY BECAUSE KUNDU SPOKE RATHER FRANKLY AND UNINHIBITEDLY ON A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS.) IN OPENING THE CONVERSATION, CHRISTOPHER NOTED HOW MUCH HE HAD ENJOYED HIS VISIT AND DISCUSSIONS IN NEW DELHI AND THAT HE HAD BEEN PLEASED TO HOST A LUNCHEON FOR FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE HERE IN WASHINGTON ABOUT A MONTH AGO. KUNDU SAID THAT THE ADVENT OF NEW ADMINISTRATIONS IN NEW DELHI AND WASHINGTON HAD OPENED THE DOORS TO A BETTER AND MORE PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP.

3. PRESIDENT'S VISIT. KUNDU HOPED THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD NOT CANCEL HIS TRIP BECAUSE EXPECTATIONS AMONG THE INDIAN PUBLIC HAD BEEN AROUSED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT. CHRISTOPHER RESPONDED THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS CAUGHT IN A VERY REAL DILEMMA, GIVEN THE HIGH PRIORITY THAT HE ATTACHED TO BOTH THE SCHEDULED VISITS AND THE ENERGY LEGISLATION NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE CONGRESS. INITIALLY, INFORMATION
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INDICATED THAT CONGRESS WOULD ADJOURN IN EARLY OCTOBER AND THAT THE ENERGY LEGISLATION WOULD BE PASSED BY THEN. UNFORTUNATELY, HOWEVER, THE DATE FOR ADJOURNMENT KEPT ON SLIPPING. KUNDU ASKED THE DEPUTY SECRETARY TO URGE THE PRESIDENT TO ATTEND A PUBLIC MEETING AT A PLACE SUCH AS RAM LILA ON SUNDAY, A WEEKLY HOLIDAY, RATHER THAN MONDAY, WHICH IS A NORMAL WORKING DAY, BECAUSE ATTENDANCE WOULD BE MUCH LARGER. CHRISTOPHER SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT LOOKED FORWARD VERY MUCH TO HIS VISIT TO INDIA AND, INDEED, NEW DELHI WAS THE CENTERPIECE OF HIS TRIP TO FOUR CONTINENTS. CHRISTOPHER THOUGHT THAT A DECISION ON POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT COULD BE EXPECTED BY THE END OF THE WEEK.

4. DISCUSSIONS WITH DESAI. AMBASSADOR PALKHIVALA ASKED THAT THE PRESIDENT AND THE USG BE SENSITIVE TO PRIME MINISTER DESAI'S DOMESTIC PROBLEMS AS THEY RELATE TO THE U.S. DESIRE TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WITH INDIA ON FULL-SCOPE SAFEGUARDS. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT INDIRA GANDHI WAS CONTINUING TO PREACH THE DOCTRINE OF SELF-RELIANCE FOR INDIA; THIS INCLUDED NUCLEAR AFFAIRS. THEREFORE, SHE WOULD EXPLOIT FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES ANY INDICATION THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAD "SURRENDERED" TO U.S. PRESSURE DURING A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT. THERE IS ADDITIONAL RESISTANCE TO FULL-SCOPE SAFEGUARDS WITHIN INDIA WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD HAVE TO OVERCOME. DESAI COULD NOT STAKE HIS POLITICAL SURVIVAL ON THIS ISSUE NOW. PALKHIVALA

HOPED, INSTEAD, THAT THE FOCUS OF ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH DESAI WOULD BE ON A CONTINUING DIALOGUE ON THE SAFEGUARDS PROBLEM. PALKHIVALA FELT OPTIMISTIC THAT A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED THROUGH SUCH A DIALOGUE. IN THE MEANTIME, IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE U.S. TO CONTINUE SUPPLYING ENRICHED URANIUM TO FUEL INDIAN NUCLEAR REACTORS AT TARAPUR. PALKHIVALA WONDERED WHETHER A FORMAL DECISION COULD BE MADE SOON ON THE RECENT APPLICATION FOR ANOTHER SHIPMENT OF URANIUM FUEL FOR TARAPUR.

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PALKHIVALA ALSO COMMENTED THAT THE INDIAN PUBLIC WOULD REACT WARMLY WERE THE PRESIDENT TO ANNOUNCE DURING HIS VISIT TO NEW DELHI THAT HE WOULD PROPOSE THAT A STATUE OF MAHATMA GANDHI BE PLACED AT AN APPROPRIATE SITE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

5. JOINT COMMISSION. PALKHIVALA EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT SECRETARY VANCE WOULD STILL CO-CHAIR A MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMISSION IF THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT WERE POSTPONED. SUCH A VISIT BY THE SECRETARY WOULD GO SOME WAY TOWARDS SATISFYING PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS IN THE EVENT THAT THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT IS RESCHEDULED. CHRISTOPHER REPLIED THAT A VISIT TO NEW DELHI BY THE SECRETARY FOR A JOINT COMMISSION MEETING WOULD CERTAINLY BE REVIEWED ONCE A DECISION WAS MADE ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT A MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE MIGHT BE RECONVENED IN DECEMBER AND THAT THE SECRETARY WAS SCHEDULED TO ATTEND A NATO MEETING IN MID-DECEMBER. IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY CHRISTOPHER, AMBASSADOR PALKHIVALA SAID HE WAS SURE THAT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT STILL WANTED THE JOINT COMMISSION MEETING HELD, PREFERABLY IN DECEMBER BUT AS SOON THEREAFTER AS POSSIBLE IN THE EVENT THAT THE SECRETARY'S SCHEDULE DID NOT PERMIT A TRIP TO NEW DELHI IN DECEMBER.

6. FOREIGN RELATIONS. (A) GENERAL. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION BY CHRISTOPHER, KUNDU REVIEWED INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS. INDIA WAS MAKING A CONCERTED EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH ITS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS EFFORT IS REFLECTED IN THE AGREEMENT RECENTLY REACHED WITH BANGLADESH ON FARAKKA. SUBSTANTIAL SACRIFICES WERE MADE BY INDIA TO REACH AGREEMENT. INDIA

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WANTS VERY MUCH TO DEVELOP PEACEFUL, STABLE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS, OTHERWISE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ALL COUNTRIES WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, THE DESAI GOVERNMENT HAD UNDERTAKEN EFFORTS TO QUIET DOWN NEGATIVE

REACTIONS IN TAMIL NADU TO DIFFICULTIES THAT THE NEW
GOVERNMENT IN COLOMBO WAS HAVING IN CONNECTION WITH ITS

TAMIL MINORITY IN NORTHERN SRI LANKA.

(B) PAKISTAN. KUNDU WONDERED WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN
CONNECTION WITH ISLAMABAD'S ATTEMPT TO ACQUIRE A NUCLEAR
REPROCESSING FACILITY FROM THE FRENCH. HE SAID THAT HE
HAD RECENTLY BEEN IN PARIS WHERE HE LEARNED THAT PAKISTAN
PLANS TO "SIGN AN AGREEMENT" FOR SUCH A FACILITY. THIS
WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE, HE SAID. KUNDU SAID HE KNEW
THAT THE U.S. HAD "PLEADED" WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF
PAKISTAN AGAINST ACQUISITION OF SUCH A FACILITY. IN
REPLY TO A QUERY, KUNDU EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT PROS-
PECTS FOR A FREE ELECTION IN PAKISTAN WERE RAPIDLY
DIMINISHING. HE SAW NO POSSIBILITY OF SUCH AN ELECTION
TAKING PLACE SOON. IN ANY EVENT, KUNDU HOPED THAT THE
REIGNS OF POWER WOULD NOT SIMPLY PASS FROM THE HANDS OF
ONE GENERAL TO ANOTHER. IT WAS CLEAR, HE THOUGHT, THAT
THE ELECTION THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE IN INDIA IN MARCH HAD
HAD AN IMPACT ON THE VOTER IN PAKISTAN.

(C) NEPAL. KUNDU CALLED ATTENTION TO THE STATUS OF B.P.
KOIRALA, NOTING THAT HE WAS AN OLD PERSONAL FRIEND. INDIA
WOULD NOT INTERFERE IN NEPALESE INTERNAL AFFAIRS. NEVER-
THELESS, HE REVEALED THAT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAD
TALKED QUIETLY TO THE NEPALESE POINTING OUT THAT A DEMO-
CRATIC REVOLUTION (AN ALLUSION TO THE RECENT INDIAN
ELECTIONS) WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE SUBCONTINENT AND
THIS WAS A DEVELOPMENT WHICH THE GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL COULD
NOT IGNORE.

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(D) BANGLADESH. DESPITE ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS
WITH DACCA, KUNDU SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME MISUNDER-
STANDING ON THE PART OF THE ZIA GOVERNMENT IN CONNECTION
WITH THE RECENT MINI-COUP ATTEMPT OF OCTOBER 2. GENERAL
ZIA HAD OPENLY ACCUSED INDIA OF INTERFERENCE. ZIA HAD
ALSO TAKEN EXCEPTION TO CRITICAL ARTICLES ON BANGLADESH
WHICH HAD APPEARED IN THE PRESS OF WEST BENGAL. THE
INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAD REJECTED ZIA'S ALLEGATIONS OF INTER-
FERENCE AND EXPLAINED THAT NEW DELHI HAD NO CONTROL OVER
ARTICLES THAT APPEARED IN INDIA'S FREE PRESS. KUNDU SAID
HE WAS PERSONALLY UNHAPPY WITH CURRENT TRENDS IN BANGLA-
DESH, REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO RECENT EXECUTIONS OF
MILITARY PERSONNEL. INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO INDIA INDI-
CATED THAT THE YOUTH IN BANGLADESH ARE IN A STATE OF
AGITATION. ONE COULD NOT KEEP THE DOORS SHUT TO PEOPLE
WHO DESIRE TO EXPRESS THEIR WILL THROUGH THE DEMOCRATIC
PROCESS. GOING BACK INTO HISTORY, KUNDU COMMENTED THAT
FORMER PRIME MINISTER MUJIB HAD BEEN MISDIRECTED, PERHAPS

WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE SOVIETS, TO MOVE IN THE

DIRECTION OF AN AUTOCRATIC STATE. PERSONALLY, HE THOUGHT THAT INDIA SHOULD HAVE DISCOURAGED THIS TREND. IN ANY EVENT, HE FELT THAT "MILITARY DICTATORSHIPS" DURING TIMES OF INTERNAL STRESS ARE OFTEN TEMPTED TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM DOMESTIC ILLS BY ACCUSING OUTSIDE POWERS OF INTERFERENCE. CHRISTOPHER INTERJECTED TO NOTE THAT INDIA WAS NOT ALONE IN HAVING UNJUSTIFIED ALLEGATIONS OF INTERFERENCE DIRECTED AGAINST IT.

(E) CHINA. KUNDU NOTED THAT THERE WERE SOME POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TRADE FIELD. MORE GROUPS WERE TRAVELING BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT CHINA WILL DO. THE CHINESE SEEM TO WANT
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FRIENDLIER RELATIONS BUT HOPE THAT THIS WOULD BE AT THE EXPENSE OF INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. THIS THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT CANNOT ACCEPT. THE CHINESE WERE UPSET BY THE DALAI LAMA'S CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER. THIS SHOULD HAVE COME AS NO SURPRISE TO THE CHINESE. THE DESAI GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT IT HAS TO BE RESPONSIVE IN GENERAL TO TIBETANS WHO FEEL THAT THEY ARE BEING OPPRESSED. THE CHINESE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS. NEVERTHELESS, THE RADIO AND PRESS OF THE PRC HAVE BEEN MORE RESTRAINED RECENTLY IN COMMENTING ON INDIA, AND THERE IS HOPE THAT RELATIONS WILL IMPROVE, HOWEVER GRA;UAL.

7.MISCELLANY. KUNDU SAID THAT HE WAS SURPRISED TO HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT. HE HAD BEEN RELEASED FROM IMPRISONMENT JUST A WEEK AFTER ELECTIONS WERE ANNOUNCED IN JANUARY 1977. IN HIS JUDGMENT, THE INDIAN ELECTION DEMONSTRATED THAT THE PEOPLE OF INDIA AND ESPECIALLY ITS YOUTH WOULD NOT SUBMIT TO AUTHORITARIAN RULE. BE THAT AS IT MAY, EXPECTATIONS ARE NOW HIGH THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD UNDERTAKE ACTIONS TO ALLEVIATE SEVERE PROBLEMS SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT. KUNDU COMMENTED THAT THE U.S. AND INDIA SHOULD WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE DEMOCRACY MORE MEANINGFUL. INDIANS FEEL THAT THEY HAVE A FRIEND IN PRESIDENT CARTER AND EXPECTATIONS ARE HIGH THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES WILL WORK TOGETHER MORE CLOSELY. CHRISTOPHER RESPONDED THAT THE U.S. WOULD LIKE TO BE OF ASSISTANCE IN WAYS THAT ARE SATISFACTORY AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT. ELECTIONS, CHRISTOPHER ADDED, ARE NOT AN END IN THEMSELVES BUT A MEANS TO SERVE PEOPLE. UNEMPLOYMENT, OF COURSE, IS NOT UNIQUE TO INDIA. IT IS A PROBLEM THAT IS TROUBLE-SOME CURRENTLY IN WESTERN EUROPE AS WELL AS THE UNITED STATES. CHRISTOPHER EXPRESSED PLEASURE IN LEARNING THAT, IN RESPONSE TO INVITATIONS EXTENDED BY THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT, TWO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS PLAN TO

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VISIT INDIA IN JANUARY. THE SENATE DELEGATION PLANS TO BE IN INDIA JANUARY 5-10 WHILE THE HOUSE DELEGATION PLANS TO VISIT COLOMBO, ISLAMABAD, NEW DELHI AND BOMBAY DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY 9-17. FYI: THESE VISITS SHOULD NOT BE FURTHER REFERRED TO IN CABLE TRAFFIC UNTIL POSTS ARE NOTIFIED THAT VISITS AND COMPOSITION OF DELEGATIONS ARE FIRM. END FYI. IN DEPARTING, KUNDU EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK OPENLY AND FRANKLY WITH THE DEPUTY SECRETARY. VANCE

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